United Nations A/C.3/53/SR.41

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
9 December 1998

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 41st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 10 November 1998, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Ball (Vice-Chairman) ..... (New Zealand)

Contents

Agenda item 110: Human rights questions (*continued*)

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (*continued*)

(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (*continued*)

(e) Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

98-82252 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Hachani (Tunisia), Mr. Ball (New Zealand), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 110: Human rights questions (*continued*) (A/53/3, 58, 74, 75, A/53/77–S/1998/171, A/53/79, 80, A/53/94–S/1998/309, A/53/99–S/1998/344, A/53/131–S/1998/435, A/53/165–S/1998/601, A/53/167, 203, A/53/205–S/1998/711, A/53/214, 215, A/53/225–S/1998/747, A/53/343, 404, 425, 489, 493, A/53/494–S/1998/949, A/53/497–S/1998/951, A/53/557; A/C.3/53/4, 5, 7, 9, 12 and 13)

(b) **Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms** (*continued*) (A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/81–S/1998/225, A/53/82–S/1998/229, A/53/83–S/1998/230, A/53/86–S/1998/240, A/53/89–S/1998/250, A/53/93–S/1998/291, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/98–S/1998/335, A/53/113–S/1998/345, A/53/115–S/1998/365, A/53/268, 279, 284, 293 and Add.1, 304, 309, 313, 324, 337, 400 and 501; A/C.3/53/6; A/C.3/53/L.5)

(c) **Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives** (*continued*) (A/53/84–S/1998/234, A/53/114, 120, A/53/182–S/1998/669, A/53/188, 322 and Add.1, 355, 364, 365, 366, 367, 402, 423 and Corr.1, 433, 490, 504, 530, 537, 539 and 563; A/C.3/53/3 and 8)

(e) **Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** (*continued*) (A/53/36)

1. **Ms. Ashour** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the Third Committee was among the bodies responsible for implementing the recommendation of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993 to rationalize the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, which had not yet been done and was a matter of priority. Although the Conference had emphasized that human rights issues should be addressed with impartiality, the countries of the South were invariably subjected to intimidation and interference in their internal affairs from the countries of the North during the Committee's annual discussions of such issues. In addition, the measures adopted by certain countries, such as the United States of America, conflicted with the call made at the Vienna Conference for States to refrain from taking steps that would impede the enjoyment of human rights, such as using food as a tool of political pressure.

2. Many United Nations documents substantiated the statements concerning poverty, exclusion and the lack of social justice contained in paragraph 4 of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/53/36). As agreed in Vienna, the right to development was the basis for the enjoyment of individual social, political and economic rights. Development was also the best means of achieving peace.

3. Emphasizing that the bodies established by human rights instruments should not exceed their designated mandate, she said that they should also facilitate the task of Member States by ensuring that the latter were not required to submit reports which covered matters outside the limits set by those instruments. Furthermore, measures should be taken as soon as possible to remedy the currently unacceptable situation whereby the membership of those bodies was heavily weighted in favour of one geographical group at the expense of others, in particular the African group. At the same time, the impartial nature of the work undertaken by such bodies should not be confused with the temporary and political nature of work such as that undertaken by special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights. In some cases, special rapporteurs demonstrated bias in their reports and relied on unconfirmed sources, while ignoring documented facts and reliable testimonies that contradicted their conclusions and recommendations. The aggressive and provocative language which they used also deterred people from cooperating with them and simply succeeded in damaging their credibility.

4. Her country's constant efforts to strengthen human rights were impeded by the unjust collective sanctions imposed on account of her country's refusal to surrender two of its citizens, the effect of which was to deprive the Libyan Arab people of various rights, *inter alia*, the right to development. Not only did collective sanctions blatantly violate the rights of the two suspects and the Libyan Arab people as a whole, but they also violated article 10 and article 11, paragraph 1, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 14, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Together with the entire Libyan people, the two suspects were being punished without trial and without fulfilment of any of the internationally agreed legal conditions.

5. There was no legal or moral justification for any State or international organization to impose sanctions in violation

of human rights, and the Security Council had no legal authority to demand that a State should surrender its citizens to another for trial. The economic sanctions imposed on her country were thus incompatible not only with the international human rights instruments, but also with the Charter of the United Nations. Recalling the words of one of the special rapporteurs, she affirmed that the sanctions harmed only the inhabitants and would not have the desired result.

6. **Ms. Campo** (Colombia) said that, during her recent visit to Colombia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had been able to learn firsthand of many of the difficulties facing Colombia in the field of human rights. Colombia had been receiving a high level of cooperation and technical assistance from the United Nations; that cooperation, based on transparency, mutual respect and good faith, had been important for the adoption and development of policies relating to the promotion and protection of human rights. Her Government hoped that United Nations bodies and the international financial institutions would support the peace programme that had been carried out by the President since his inauguration in August 1998.

7. In Colombia, there were high levels of poverty and social inequality, and great disparities between urban and rural standards of living. An internal armed conflict had been going on for over 40 years, with serious repercussions for the poorest people in particular. Her Government accorded priority to finding a solution, because the resources being wasted in war needed to be invested in peace.

8. Her Government denounced the acts of barbarity committed in the previous week against civilian population of the city of Mitú by members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, using weapons prohibited by international humanitarian law. The international community must strongly condemn grave violations of international humanitarian law in any part of the world, without distinction as to the perpetrators or the motives adduced.

9. Her Government was aware of the need to improve the human rights situation, and in particular to put an end to the serious violations of the right to life, liberty and personal integrity committed by guerrillas, paramilitary units, common criminals, and, to a much lesser degree, agents of the State. That struggle was linked to the struggle against poverty and social injustice, and constituted the core of the national development plan and the peace programme of her Government.

10. Colombia had acceded to the basic international human rights instruments and their optional protocols, and was a member of the inter-American system for the protection of those rights; it was meeting its reporting obligations and was cooperating with the special rapporteurs. Colombia's periodic reports described the efforts of successive Governments to guarantee and protect the human rights of all Colombians in the midst of internal conflict. Colombia had various programmes for the protection of human rights at the national level. Various State entities and civil society were conducting consultations with a view to establishing links with the International Criminal Court. Colombia attached great importance to the draft declaration on the protection of human rights defenders prepared by the Commission on Human Rights; her Government had held several meetings with organizations of human rights defenders, conducted studies on the risks attached to their work, and instructed all government offices to offer the assistance requested. The Vice-President of Colombia had been appointed national high commissioner for human rights.

11. Colombia felt a special responsibility to protect the rights of displaced persons and groups, especially women and children. The church and several non-governmental organizations, as well as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, had been involved in the effort to provide relief to the displaced population. Colombia would host a regional conference on internal displacement in 1999.

12. **Mr. Donokusumo** (Indonesia) said that his delegation welcomed the emphasis which the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had given in her report (A/53/36) to large-scale violations of economic, social and cultural rights over the past year; the link that was established between human rights and the negative consequences of unfettered competition and globalization, resulting in the marginalization of countries and an exacerbation of poverty worldwide, was also important. His delegation agreed that international financial institutions must identify and weigh the human rights impact of their activities; the perceived economic necessities of the day should no longer prevail over the rights of individuals to adequate health care, food and nutrition. The realization of the right to development, at both international and national levels, was essential.

13. His delegation was encouraged that a global partnership for human rights was envisaged as an important aspect of the programme of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

14. His delegation welcomed the adoption of the draft declaration on the right and responsibility of individuals,

groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms (A/C.3/53/L.5), and believed that its implementation should take fully into account the principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, as well as the historical, cultural and religious backgrounds of the societies and communities concerned.

15. His delegation was encouraged by the approach of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in ensuring the universality and non-selectivity of the consideration of human rights issues. It was therefore disappointed that certain countries and regional groups continued to selectively address human rights.

16. The statements made earlier with regard to the human rights situation in Indonesia, including East Timor, had failed to recognize the positive developments that had taken place in Indonesia recently, including the substantial reduction of military personnel assigned in East Timor, greater political freedom in the province, and systematic release of East Timorese prisoners and detainees involved in political activities. It was regrettable that certain delegations had suggested a political solution of the East Timor issue, which was completely irrelevant to the Committee's deliberations. Indonesia remained committed to the tripartite dialogue, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, with a view to finding a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the issue.

17. Mr. Hynes (Canada) said that human rights violations must be addressed in a forthright manner, demonstrating that the United Nations was serious about translating the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into reality.

18. The current conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the persisting ethnic violence in Rwanda and Burundi, raised grave concerns about respect for humanitarian law and human rights. The return of hate propaganda and calls for ethnic violence could lead to a spiralling of human right abuses.

19. Canada deplored the violence that had taken place in the province of Kosovo over the past year, in particular the direct targeting of civilians by the Serb authorities. It condemned all abuses committed by the "Kosovo liberation army", and welcomed the establishment of the Kosovo verification mission by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

20. Canada expected Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to fully meet their obligations under the Dayton Agreement, in particular on the critical issue of the return of refugees and displaced persons. Persons indicted for war crimes must face justice before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Canada noted with concern the restrictions on press freedoms in Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

21. Canada was concerned about continued reports of human rights violations in the Sudan, including arbitrary arrests, religious persecution and slavery; while welcoming the ceasefire, Canada deplored the use of military force to disrupt relief efforts, particularly the indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets by government forces.

22. The human rights situation in Afghanistan was among the worst in the world; in the light of reports that the Taliban had conducted atrocities against civilians and was systematically denying women and girls the most fundamental human needs, the world must demand that the Taliban should respect internationally established norms.

23. The Government of Iraq continued to rule by terror, indiscriminate arrest, imprisonment and execution; it had taken no steps to curb widespread human rights abuses, and had refused to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights.

24. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, there had been setbacks in recent months with the closure of several newspapers and magazines and the arrest of journalists. His delegation was concerned about the heightened persecution of the Iranian Baha'i community, and the failure to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by women of their human rights.

25. Canada had long been concerned about the absence of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; needless bureaucratic obstacles were now being imposed on United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations, threatening the delivery of food to the most needy recipients.

26. Canada deplored the widespread detention of elected representatives and members of the national league for democracy and other political parties in Myanmar, and called on the military regime to demonstrate a genuine commitment to national reconciliation and democracy by entering into dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other representatives of opposition and minority groups.

27. Canada remained deeply concerned about the security and humanitarian situation in Algeria. The visit of the panel of eminent persons had been a most welcome development, and Canada hoped that that spirit of cooperation would be

extended to the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations.

28. In some countries of South East Asia, the continuing economic crisis had exacerbated political and social stresses. In Malaysia, concerns had been raised about the use of the internal security act to detain political opponents and others without trial and to restrict freedom of speech and freedom of assembly; Canada was also concerned about the treatment of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and hoped that allegations of police brutality would be properly investigated.

29. Canada welcomed the progress made in Indonesia in respect of human rights. It welcomed the new approach in dealing with East Timor, but believed that the East Timorese themselves should be involved. It encouraged the Government of Indonesia to consider other initiatives conducive to a full settlement of that issue.

30. Canada commended Nigeria's renewed commitment to the transition to democracy and its release of many political prisoners, and urged that the pending cases should be dealt with expeditiously and that the decree providing for detention without trial should be repealed. It welcomed Nigeria's confirmation that the Special Rapporteur's visit to Nigeria would take place in the course of 1998.

31. Canada welcomed China's signing of the International Covenants on Human Rights, and urged it to ratify and implement them swiftly. It remained concerned about the extensive use of the death penalty, restrictions on freedom of religion and the suppression of political dissent. China's willingness to conduct a dialogue with Canada and others on human rights was encouraging.

32. Canada appreciated its frank human rights dialogue with Cuba, and welcomed Cuba's increased religious freedom, its invitation to selected United Nations mechanisms, and the release of political prisoners. However, the continued existence of prisoners of conscience, and the failure to protect freedom of expression, and civil and political rights in general, remained cause for concern.

33. In Haiti, much remained to be done, particularly with regard to impunity, abuse of authority, prison conditions and judicial reform. Canada was very concerned about the absence of agreement regarding a prime minister, but was encouraged by the Haitian Government's continued commitment to the cause of human rights and its recent invitation to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

34. Canada welcomed recent initiatives aimed at ending the civil conflict in Colombia, but had grave concerns about increasing violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. It hoped that the visit by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights would lead to further progress.

35. **Ms. Ramírez** (Costa Rica) said that Costa Rica's commitment to respect for human rights at the national and international levels was well known; human rights could not be subject to temporary political considerations, and imposed duties and obligations on everyone.

36. Costa Rica rejected cultural restrictions on universal respect for human rights. Although it did not support some of the conceptual limitations in the Vienna Programme of Action, it had accepted them for the sake of consensus. The follow-up should provide an opportunity to remedy the weaknesses, for example in the gender-based approach. Costa Rica supported the strengthening of the competence and functions of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

37. Her delegation supported the High Commissioner's view of the situation in Rwanda, and the need to strengthen the judicial structure to ensure that the many cases of massive human rights violations were prosecuted. That required a clear commitment by the Rwandan authorities to strengthen the capacity of the judicial system, and international technical and financial cooperation to ensure that the Rwandan courts met international standards.

38. Costa Rica found it regrettable that the new Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was continuing to reject international commitments and, in particular, its obligation to accept United Nations investigations, and was refusing to recognize responsibility for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. That Government must resume cooperation with the joint mission and the Special Rapporteur and offer all necessary guarantees for the performance of their functions, particularly in the eastern areas of the country, in order to ensure that cases were brought to trial and evidence was salvaged.

39. Her delegation was deeply concerned about the overt human rights violations of the Government of Iraq. It was alarmed about the serious humanitarian situation of the population, but felt that the existence of the sanctions regime did not justify a systematic policy of human rights violations by the Government. The normalization of Iraq's relations with the international community involved implementation of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and action to eliminate the political and legal order which was systematically infringing on human rights.

40. Costa Rica was alarmed about the increase in human rights violations in Afghanistan; it was particularly concerned about violations of the right to life of the population. The United Nations must carry out an investigation to establish what had happened and assign responsibility. Costa Rica was concerned about the violation of the rights of women and girls by the Taliban, and called on the Taliban to cease such actions immediately.

41. Costa Rica rejected the violation of the human rights of the population of Albanian origin in Kosovo by the Serb authorities in an overt policy of ethnic cleansing.

42. Mr. Sychev (Belarus) said that the progress made in human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights gave grounds for optimism regarding the translation of its provisions into reality. But optimism would not suffice — there must also be decisive and coordinated action at the international, regional and national levels, guided by the principles of international solidarity, cooperation and respect for the viewpoint of all States.

43. While no State could claim to have fully realized the whole panoply of human rights, the situation in Belarus was generally satisfactory, notwithstanding the difficulties encountered during the current period of transition. There was political and social stability, relations among the various nationalities were good, and citizens enjoyed the right to freedom of religion and freedom of expression. It was true that there had been a number of teething problems, but they were not the product of a deliberate policy of the leadership, which was committed to ensuring the unconditional observance of human rights and promoting respect for democratic principles and norms, including political pluralism and the rule of law. In accordance with the Constitution, which had been approved in a referendum, the State's main aim was the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

44. Many activities were planned in Belarus for the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In particular, a programme of human rights education would be made compulsory in every educational establishment. Moreover, the Declaration would be widely publicized, since knowledge of one's rights was the key to active citizenship. Already, the Belarusian Parliament had held a series of hearings on human rights issues within the framework of the anniversary, with the broad participation of members of the Government and civil society. Following the hearings, the Parliament had adopted a series of recommendations which the Government was putting into practice.

45. In 1997, Belarus had presented its fourth periodic report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. His Government had appreciated the critical but constructive comments of the Human Rights Committee and had appointed a working group to examine ways of putting its recommendations into effect. His Government was also cooperating with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which had established an Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus to provide technical assistance in human rights, legislative reform and the development of civil society.

46. He noted with regret that discussion of the situation of human rights in Belarus was not always conducted in a constructive and balanced manner. Certain States had adopted a sterile political approach and their statements to the Committee, particularly those of the representative of the United States and the representative of Austria, speaking on behalf of the European Union, had contained groundless allegations against his Government. Those two delegations had singled out for criticism a handful of countries, chosen according to their political loyalty and economic and commercial usefulness.

47. It was not true — as alleged — that press freedom had been curtailed. In fact, approximately 1,000 periodicals were published in Belarus, of which only a quarter were State-owned. The television channels of the five neighbouring States could be viewed without restriction, as could over 20 satellite television channels. The legislation on the mass media which had recently been enacted by his Government, prohibiting incitement to violence, religious and racial division, as well as the use of the media to disseminate defamatory statements, reflected accepted standards in every democratic country. His Government had never and would never resort to censorship, which was prohibited by the Constitution.

48. The allegations of violation of the rights to freedom of assembly and association in Belarus were belied by the fact that, in a country of some 10 million inhabitants, there were 29 political parties, 42 trade unions, over 1,000 nationwide public associations and many more at local level. There was no evidence to support the allegation by the representative of Austria, speaking on behalf of the European Union, that peaceful demonstrations in Belarus had been violently suppressed. By contrast, the situation of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia, one of the associated States, was a legitimate cause for concern.

49. With regard to the United States, Amnesty International had drawn attention in a recent report to widespread violations of human rights and discrimination

in various State structures. The authors had concluded that the United States Government was not applying the international human rights standards by which it judged other States. Such double standards were unacceptable. Moreover, the promotion of human rights should be founded on non-selectivity and objectivity and should not be exploited for political ends.

50. His delegation believed that, in seeking to translate human rights standards into reality, the international community must focus not only on the political, but also on the economic and social spheres. Belarus, as a young country with a transitional economy, was acutely aware of the interdependence of political and civil rights on the one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, on the other.

51. Belarus faced a number of difficulties in the field of human rights, but his Government was seeking to overcome them and was ready to engage in a constructive dialogue with a view to finding solutions, for it was convinced that only through concerted action could the international community realize the noble aims of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

52. **Ms. Afetse Tay** (Togo) said that, while there had been substantial progress in human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, much remained to be done. Each day, the scourges of ethnic or religious conflict, xenophobia, terrorism and arbitrary detention struck populations whose living conditions were already precarious. Firm action and practical measures must be taken to strengthen the enjoyment of human rights with due regard for national and regional characteristics. A global partnership was needed, involving all the social actors. In that connection, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was playing a catalytic role in the development of such an alliance. It must be provided with the resources necessary to expand its technical cooperation programme, of which Togo had been a beneficiary.

53. It had been established that enhancing respect for human rights was a vital means of consolidating peace and stability. The international community must take measures to prevent the massive violations of human rights, often the root cause of civil conflicts. She welcomed, in that regard, the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish a human rights field presence and to promote so-called human rights diplomacy, which entailed initiating dialogues with Governments with a view to identifying the obstacles to the enjoyment of human rights.

54. Human rights education and public information activities were also important preventive measures, and she therefore urged Member States to contribute further to the implementation of the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. Given the importance of national institutions in promoting democracy and the rule of law, particularly in Africa, the international community must facilitate the implementation of the Durban Declaration adopted in July 1998 by the Second Regional Conference of African National Human Rights Institutions.

55. The ratification of human rights instruments was not an end in itself. The real challenge for States parties lay in fulfilling the obligations they undertook in so doing, hence the importance of the treaty-monitoring bodies. She noted with concern the declining representation among the members of those bodies of nationals of developing countries, particularly in Africa. Currently, presenting a candidate for election to the treaty-monitoring bodies was a difficult and costly process, causing many States to become disenchanted.

56. While the primary responsibility for the protection of human rights lay with States, the international environment must be conducive to the realization of that goal and to human development. Her delegation therefore welcomed the initiative by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme to integrate development and human rights more closely. The international community, for its part, must step up its efforts to eradicate the injustices and inequalities which prevented the full enjoyment of human rights. The scale of that challenge was enormous, but, if Member States coordinated their efforts, human rights would become a reality for all.

57. **Mrs. Junod** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that, in accordance with its mandate, ICRC worked to achieve the faithful application of international humanitarian law, which applied specifically to armed conflicts. As such, it was distinct from human rights law, although the two were interlinked. Thus, the 1979 Protocols Additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions contained several rules drawn from international human rights instruments, and, conversely, certain provisions of human rights law, such as article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, reflected humanitarian law. While in principle human rights law remained applicable during armed conflicts, in practice additional safeguards were needed to provide adequate protection for those caught up in the hostilities. Accordingly, humanitarian law conferred upon them a number of supplementary rights, such as the right to medical care and the right of prisoners of war to correspond with their families.

58. While humanitarian and human rights law overlapped to some degree, with both recognizing certain core rights such as the right to life and the right not to be subjected to torture, ICRC viewed with caution the proposal currently being considered by the Commission on Human Rights to define what it described as fundamental principles of humanity common to both branches of law and applicable in all situations. In its view, the effectiveness of the existing provisions of humanitarian and human rights law derived from their specificities and any amalgamation might prove detrimental.

59. Nevertheless, ICRC welcomed the growing interest in humanitarian law among the organs of the United Nations system, notably the Commission on Human Rights and the Security Council. New protection measures adopted by those organs during the past decade included the presence of international observers from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

60. Given the growing number of humanitarian organizations active in conflict situations, there was a danger of duplication of work. Moreover, there were disparities in their working methods. Often the approaches were complementary, but it was important always to ensure that each organization adopted the course of action most likely to benefit the victims of the conflicts. To that end, there must be close cooperation among the various actors involved and agreement as to the norms governing their operations. In that connection, ICRC had organized workshops open to all concerned. Already, some progress had been made. In Rwanda, for example, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the ICRC delegation in the country had devised a joint set of guidelines governing their respective activities in places of detention. Also, there were regular consultations between the Office of the High Commissioner and ICRC headquarters.

61. Cooperation among organizations was vital from the ethical, legal and operational standpoints, since the victims of conflicts had the right to the most effective protection that could be afforded. It was also important to avoid overlapping and to eliminate disparities in the approaches adopted by the various organizations where they proved to be counterproductive. The international community must build on its efforts in the fields of human rights and humanitarian law in order to attain respect for all human rights at all times in all places.

62. **Mr. Powles** (New Zealand) said that his delegation was very concerned at the deterioration of the human rights situation in Myanmar. Extremely serious violations continued to occur; they included political arrest, forced labour and summary executions. The Government's continuing failure to engage the opposition in political dialogue made it difficult to see any prospect for national reconciliation.

63. In his most recent report (A/53/322 and Add.1), the Special Rapporteur for the former Yugoslavia recorded some important progress since 1995, but emphasized that there still remained a high level of disregard for human rights and was particularly critical of the lack of cooperation on the part of State and local authorities in implementing positive developments in legislation and policies. The Government of Yugoslavia had recently taken some steps to comply with the Security Council resolutions on the situation in Kosovo. He urged the Yugoslav authorities and the Kosovar Albanian parties to the conflict to cooperate fully with the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

64. New Zealand had welcomed the part recently played by the Islamic Republic of Iran in regional human rights initiatives but had been disappointed to see recent reports of religious persecution, specifically the execution of some Baha'is.

65. His Government deplored the fact that Iraq continued to refuse access to the Special Rapporteur and to ignore requests by United Nations agencies for the admission of human rights monitors. He nonetheless welcomed the expansion of the United Nations oil-for-food programme, with its provision of funds to enable Iraq to purchase humanitarian supplies. However, he shared the frustration of the Special Rapporteur at the Government's lack of cooperation in the implementation of that humanitarian programme.

66. Regarding Afghanistan, he was concerned by the Special Rapporteur's assessment that the human rights situation had deteriorated further since his last report. New Zealand urged the warring factions there to move towards a peaceful resolution of their conflict.

67. As to the African Great Lakes region, he regretted that massive population movements, as well as armed conflict, were contributing to violation of the human rights of many people in Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With regard to the Sudan, New Zealand was troubled by reports of human rights violations, particularly of the rights of women and children. Moreover, it continued to be disturbed by atrocities being committed in Algeria. He urged the Algerian Government to engage disaffected political communities in the State political process, while

recognizing the need to bring to justice those accused of crimes against the population.

68. Turning to the positive steps occurring elsewhere in the world, he welcomed Indonesia's commitment to improve human rights and create a more open political environment. The release of political prisoners and greater media freedom were encouraging developments, and New Zealand looked forward to the passage of new electoral laws setting the stage for the 1999 general elections. His Government also welcomed the encouraging developments concerning East Timor which had been given impetus by the new Indonesian leadership's constructive approach.

69. He welcomed the holding of elections in Cambodia, which had been broadly representative of the will of the Cambodian people. However, New Zealand had been troubled by the ongoing political disruption and serious human rights violations, including the impunity of those committing such violations.

70. Referring to Papua New Guinea, he acknowledged the progress made towards a resolution of the conflict in Bougainville. The Papua New Guinea Government and all parties to the dispute had made significant steps in bringing lasting and durable peace and, in the strong tradition of regional cooperation, New Zealand was working closely with its neighbours and with Papua New Guinea and was proud to participate in the Peace Monitoring Group.

71. His delegation welcomed China's signature of the two International Covenants on Human Rights, and acknowledged its steps towards ratification. Nevertheless, continued reports of human rights violations remained a matter of concern.

72. As to Nigeria, New Zealand acknowledged the improving human rights situation, which was an important step towards the resumption of Nigeria's membership in the British Commonwealth, as would be the assumption of office of a democratically elected government in May 1999.

73. On thematic questions, New Zealand supported the priority given by the High Commissioner for Human Rights to economic, social and cultural rights and to the right to development. However, urgent consideration must be given to ways of ensuring the sustainability of the treaty-body system, and in that regard he welcomed the establishment of an internal special task force and the review being undertaken by the Commission on Human Rights. In the short to medium term, efforts should centre on improving the reporting process and enhancing coordination between the treaty bodies and other elements of the United Nations human rights system. New Zealand also strongly supported the regional arrangements which were evolving in connection with the recent proliferation in national human rights institutions around the world.

74. **Mr. Nuanthasing** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that, in dealing with human rights issues, account should be taken of the historical, socio-economic and cultural background of each country. No country should impose particular human rights standards on another.

75. Since the country's foundation in 1975, his Government had done its utmost to protect the human rights of the multi-ethnic Lao people. The Constitution had served as a basis for ensuring the people's rights and for gradually transforming the country into one ruled by law. The Government was restructuring the legal system, thereby providing guarantees for the further promotion of human rights. A body of new laws had considerably strengthened the prospects for a gradual implementation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Lao people.

76. Activities planned for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would include dissemination of the Declaration and other international human rights instruments in the Lao language, the holding of a national meeting, issuance of postal stamps and a further granting of amnesty to prisoners.

77. **Ms. Kerr** (Australia) said that all the human rights enshrined in the Declaration must be protected, and one set of rights could not be championed at the expense of another.

78. In Kosovo, it was crucial that efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement should be successful before the onset of winter.

79. Australia recognized the stated commitment of President Khatami to the promotion and protection of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and welcomed in particular the Government's dissociation from the reward for killing Salman Rushdie. Nevertheless, serious human rights problems remained, including the treatment of the Baha'i community.

80. Her Government was deeply disturbed by the deteriorating human rights situation throughout Afghanistan, and urged all Afghan factions to respect universal human rights standards and to establish safe conditions for the resumption of vitally needed humanitarian assistance.

81. Regarding Algeria, Australia had been encouraged in July 1998 by the Government's readiness to receive the fact-finding panel appointed by the Secretary-General and hoped that the presidential elections in early 1999 would lead to positive change and a decrease in violence.

82. In the case of Nigeria, she hoped for a peaceful transition to civilian government following the forthcoming democratic elections.

83. Australia urged the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to enable the United Nations human rights investigations to continue as soon as possible.

84. Whilst acknowledging the increased number of trials of those accused of genocide in Rwanda, she said that due process of law should be applied in dealing with the accused.

85. Her Government also urged the Government of Cuba to ensure freedom of expression and assembly — *inter alia* by reforming legislation so as to allow political parties, media and non-governmental organizations to function freely — and to conform with international standards applicable to political detainees.

86. Australia urged the early ratification and incorporation into domestic law of the two International Covenants on Human Rights recently signed by China without significant reservations. Her Government encouraged the recent steps which China had taken to enhance cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and looked forward to further visits to China by United Nations human rights officials.

87. The recent welcome visit to Myanmar by the Secretary-General's Special Representative should be the start of a constructive dialogue between the Government and the United Nations, leading to progress in the political and human rights situation. At the same time, Australia regretted the continuing violation of human rights, including forced labour and the detention of opposition members. She called on the Government to release the political prisoners unconditionally.

88. Regarding Indonesia, Australia welcomed the launch of its national action plan on human rights and the consolidation of the role of the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights. Her Government had sought to assist Indonesia's human rights efforts in practical ways, including through comprehensive financial assistance for its National Commission, and had expanded its programme of aid, recognizing that the economic crisis had made the achievement of economic and social rights more difficult.

89. Australia also welcomed Cambodia's efforts at improving the country's human rights situation, including an action plan to combat child prostitution and trafficking, improvements in education, and extension of the mandate of the Phnom Penh Office of the High Commissioner. However, there remained much to be concerned about, including the continuing problem of impunity, and her Government therefore welcomed the appointment by the Secretary-General of a group of experts to evaluate human rights violations committed by the Khmer Rouge and options for bringing the perpetrators to justice. Australia urged all parties to accept the results of the July 1998 elections and to make the compromises necessary to establish a workable government.

90. As a friendly neighbour of Papua New Guinea, Australia welcomed the positive developments in Bougainville, and in particular commended all the parties for having respected a cessation of hostilities since October 1997 and a ceasefire since May 1998. Her Government continued to give strong support to reconciliation and respect for human rights, through both its aid programme and its involvement in the multinational peace-monitoring force.

91. **Mr. Chirinciuc** (Republic of Moldova) said that, although the promotion and protection of human rights had become one of the principal objectives of the United Nations, human rights were primarily the responsibility of individual nations.

92. The Republic of Moldova had been engaged in democratizing its society and had become a State where the rule of law prevailed. It therefore attached particular importance to human rights, had ratified most of the international human rights instruments and had acceded also to the relevant Council of Europe human rights conventions. Similarly, the new Constitution, which provided for the international human rights treaties to be integrated into domestic law, afforded human rights guarantees for all citizens, while national legislation also guaranteed minorities freedom of expression and the right to the free development of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identities. Also, Parliament had made reforms improving the judicial system.

93. All the elections held since independence had been free and fair. Despite the economic and financial crisis, the Government was making considerable efforts to protect human rights, and had strengthened human rights institutions. It was greatly appreciative of the assistance provided by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and in the setting up of an ombudsman's office. The dialogue between the Government and civil society on human rights had recently been intensified, and efforts were under way to promote human rights education and public awareness campaigns. Moreover, as part of the commemoration of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a multi-volume edition of international human rights treaties was planned.

94. However, democratization in the Republic of Moldova was being adversely affected by the actions of the separatist regime in the east of the country, which was continuing to violate the human rights of the Moldovan population there. Moldovan citizens who lived in the separatist-controlled region could not vote in elections, use the courts and participate in Moldova's economic reforms. Nor could they study their mother tongue or even use the Latin alphabet.

95. Despite many appeals to the separatist regime in the eastern region, the members of the Ilascu group had not yet been set free. They had been imprisoned illegally in 1992 and, despite the fact that Ilie Ilascu himself had in the meantime been elected to the Moldovan Parliament for a second term, he remained in detention.

96. The Government of the Republic of Moldova nevertheless reaffirmed its desire to restart negotiations, provided the principle of territorial integrity was taken as a given.

97. **Mr. Zackheos** (Cyprus) said that further effort was required in promoting and protecting human rights, and States must therefore have the political will to accede to the international human rights conventions and to implement them in full. Any reservations should be limited to specific provisions.

98. The Government of Cyprus fully supported the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and welcomed her report. However, while sharing her view that positive engagement could be fruitful in situations where human rights were being violated, it believed also that there should be no impunity for the perpetrators of gross violations of human rights. Thus, the Government welcomed the efforts to establish the International Criminal Court and supported the European Court of Human Rights. However, such institutions could succeed only if political expediency was not allowed to interfere in the delivery of justice.

99. He informed the Committee that negotiations for the accession of Cyprus to the European Union had begun that very day in Brussels; Cyprus was ready to take the necessary steps to ensure that the negotiations succeeded. In that connection, he pointed out that one of the crucial conditions for such accession involved the applicant's human right record; Cyprus had long been ready to meet that challenge. The Government was sure that membership in the European Union would contribute to the development and welfare of all Cypriots and ensure that they enjoyed the highest standards of human rights.

100. In that spirit, the President had invited the Turkish Cypriot community to participate in the negotiations; although that invitation had been welcomed by the European Union as fair and generous, it had unfortunately been rejected by Turkey and by the Turkish Cypriot leadership.

101. The Government was dedicated to creating a society in which respect for human rights was paramount. It had made great efforts and had many achievements in the human rights field, as had been amply demonstrated in the conclusions of the various treaty bodies on the reports which Cyprus had submitted to them. However, despite the Government's efforts, the basic human rights of Cypriots continued to be violated as a result of the crime perpetrated by Turkey in 1974: one third of Cypriot territory was still under occupation, and a large Turkish force had conducted a policy of ethnic cleansing there. The Government believed that one effect of international inaction against that crime could be seen in its subsequent re-enactment in other parts of the world.

102. By their forcible expulsion from their ancestral homes, over 200,000 Cypriots had been denied their property; also, settlers from Turkey were still coming in, breaching the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 by changing the demographic structure of Cyprus. He noted, however, that the situation had also led to the emigration of a third of the Turkish Cypriot population from the occupied territory. Also, the Turkish side had recently intensified its campaign to expropriate the property of Greek Cypriot refugees, in violation of international law. However, in a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in 1996, Turkey had been found guilty of violating the property rights of a Greek Cypriot refugee. The judgment had confirmed that all refugees remained the owners of their property in the occupied part of Cyprus, from which they had been forcibly expelled. Indeed, in a further judgment in July 1998 in the same case, the Court had decided that Turkey must pay the applicant substantial compensation. The Government hoped that the judgment would be implemented in accordance with the established practice of the Council of Europe.

103. The Government was particularly concerned about the "enclaved" Greek Maronites in the occupied area. He quoted extensively from the report of the Secretary-General (S/1996/411), which stated *inter alia* that the Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the northern part of the island were subjected to limitation of many basic freedoms, which had the effect that inexorably, with the passage of time, those communities would cease to exist. The situation had indeed worsened: the Maronite presence in one village had been terminated in the intervening period. He called on the Turkish side to respond by implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Peace-keeping

Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) contained in document S/1995/1020.

104. He expressed deep regret that the families of missing persons in Cyprus still did not know the fate of their loved ones. The Secretary-General reported (S/1998/488, para. 23) that because the Turkish Cypriot side had refused to discuss arrangements for the return of the remains of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot missing persons, no progress had been made towards implementation of the July 1997 agreement between the two sides on humanitarian issues.

105. He renewed his Government's appeal to all concerned, particularly Turkey, to take the necessary steps to resolve what was indeed a purely humanitarian issue, and appealed especially to the Turkish Cypriots to implement the July 1997 agreement and show commitment to the work on missing persons, thereby helping to end the agony of uncertainty that had beset the families of the missing for so long.

106. The deliberate and extensive destruction by Turkey of the Greek Cypriot cultural and religious heritage in the occupied area was of great concern to his Government and, he believed, to the international community. He referred to a report in *The New York Times* of 1 April 1998 that, according to European police investigators, the despoliation of Greek Orthodox churches in the occupied area had been one of the most systematic art-looting operations since the Second World War.

107. The bitter experience of the Greek Cypriot community had made its members understand that respect for human rights was an obligation that must be fulfilled for the sake of future generations; thus, the Vienna Declaration and Platform for Action had become a blueprint for the Government.

108. **Mr. Ziaran** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that there were many flaws in United Nations human rights activities, which were influenced to a large extent by the economic and political interests of a minority. Thus, double standards had become well-known features of the system. Also, United Nations special procedures in the human rights field were arbitrary with regard to the selection of countries, judgements of progress and decisions on ending monitoring: almost everything was at the mercy of the "sponsors", self-declared champions of human rights that used the machinery unstintingly in their own short-term interests, doing human rights no good at all.

109. Change was necessary because the system was getting nowhere and its credibility would be seriously tainted in the eyes of world public opinion if the trend continued. There was, however, no need to dismantle the system: rather, human rights, as the concern of every nation and every individual, should be emancipated from control by those who would portray themselves as "knights in shining armour". Thus, due consideration must be given to alternative approaches; and that applied especially to the establishment of national human rights mechanisms, which could contribute significantly, as could technical assistance and advisory services, human rights education and public awareness campaigns.

110. The Government was fully committed to promoting human rights, following the supreme teachings of Islam that human rights were celestial in origin and it was therefore fitting to protect them.

111. Of course, his country was far from achieving all its objectives; its society was not immaculate. However, there had been significant progress and there was a strong commitment and great diligence on the Government's part. Over the past year, democratic institutions had been consolidated, more active civil and political participation had been encouraged, the rule of law had been reinforced, women's rights had been promoted and national mechanisms for protecting and promoting human rights, particularly the freedom of expression, had been fostered.

112. In connection with the draft resolution being prepared on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, sponsored by the States members of the European Union, the Government believed that international monitoring was not warranted; however, it was prepared to reach a consensus with the sponsors and had promised that it would cooperate fully with the human rights mechanisms.

113. Nevertheless, the Government believed that there should be some light at the end of the tunnel: there should be incentives for cooperation with human rights mechanisms, and the criteria for "graduation" should be known. International monitoring should not be seen as the only solution: the task of institutionalizing human rights protection could not succeed unless national institutions were given a chance to take the lead.

114. Lastly, he expressed his appreciation to the International Committee of the Red Cross for assisting in the return of the bodies of the Iranian diplomats murdered in Afghanistan by Taliban forces.

115. **Mr. Sarnaik** (India) said that there had been rapid development in the rights-based approach within the United Nations system, of which the report of the High Commissioner (A/53/36) provided a useful survey of the past year. The scope of that approach varied according to context:

the legal basis for the rights of the child and those of women were clearly established under the relevant conventions, whereas the right to development was most clearly articulated in the Declaration on the Right to Development.

116. The rights-based approach was clearly appropriate in the case of basic civil rights such as the right to non-discrimination and the right to equality, which were dealt with at the national level. However, the implications of that approach as it applied to economic, social and cultural rights, development and the sharing of obligations at the national and international levels were less evident, particularly in the case of developing countries.

117. His Government supported the rights-based approach insofar as it implied that both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights were inherent to the individual or the collective rather than conferred by an act of welfare or charity. That approach was based on an accepted body of law, and respect for human rights was independent of a country's resources or level of development. India had never mortgaged democracy for development and the elimination of poverty, nor had it made human rights contingent on development.

118. However, where the inability to enjoy human rights was related to underdevelopment, rights alone were not sufficient. Development based on democracy and popular participation and backed by adequate resources which were, in themselves, considered as a right, was essential to a rights-based approach that maintained responsibility for guaranteeing the exercise of human rights at the international level, rather than reducing the international community's role merely to monitoring and enforcing civil and political rights.

119. Several structural factors, including the debt burden, poor terms of trade and inadequate technology and managerial expertise, limited the exercise of human rights in the countries affected by those problems. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action recognized that human rights were a legitimate concern of the international community; however, concern must be complemented by solidarity and cooperation, including cooperation for development.

120. Seeking to clarify the concept of the right to development, he said that that right had been presaged by the preamble of the Charter in the phrase "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". It was the right of the poor to escape poverty and of the underdeveloped to realize their human rights fully. At the country level, it involved access to development resources at existing levels; however, it was as important to address the imbalances and distortions at the international level that affected the right to development. It was not enough to ensure that all citizens received a fair share of the national "cake", whatever its size; there was also a need to create conditions under which developing countries and their citizens, individually and collectively, could enlarge the "cake" and close the gap between the developed world and their own.

121. Official development assistance was only token acknowledgement that the poor had a right to improve their standard of living and that the wealthy owed something to the poor. The right to development did not constitute a claim for compensation for the exploitation of the developing world — though as a corollary of the rights-based approach such a claim could not be ruled out — but rather a recognition that the wealthy had a duty to the poor based not on charity but on the right to live in dignity. The moral force commanded by the relevant bodies of the United Nations system would be crucial in giving credibility to that recognition.

122. Indicators and benchmarks in the field of economic, social and cultural rights must take into account not only varying levels of development but also national and international obligations; they must be instruments for joint action rather than merely a means of stripping the disadvantaged of the little dignity that they had by holding up images of the strong as a measure of their own inadequacy.

123. In concluding, he wished to comment on two of the reports before the Committee. His delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance (A/53/279), particularly his balanced approach and his recommendation to redesignate his mandate to focus not only on religious intolerance but also on freedom of religion and belief.

124. With regard to the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, the chilling detail of the accounts contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur (A/53/539), and the independent corroboration thereof, concerning the violation of the rights of the Hazara minority were extremely worrisome. The international community could not continue to ignore that situation on the grounds that it concerned a far-distant country or because other economic interests were at stake. A strong resolution should be the beginning of a concerted strategy to make the situation in Afghanistan more acceptable.

125. **Mrs. Kalajdzisalihovic** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that she disagreed with the comments of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Croatia and Yugoslavia (A/53/322 and Add.1) that the situation in all those countries had deteriorated. In her country, that situation had improved. Peace was taking hold, and the implementation of the Dayton Agreement was having a gradual, positive impact. One of the latest achievements had been the holding of peaceful and democratic general elections throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, largely the result of the improvements in the situation of human rights. Those improvements included the promotion of independent media, increased freedom of movement, ongoing local police restructuring and the arrival at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia of an increasing number of indicted war criminals. Without the international presence, those improvements would have been impossible.

126. Much work remained to be done, however, in implementing some of the key provisions of the Agreement. Her Government was gravely concerned in particular over key provisions on the return of refugees, full cooperation with the International Tribunal and the strengthening of the common institutions. The return of refugees and internally displaced persons was crucial to achieving a lasting peace and the development of a multi-ethnic democratic State. Regrettably, despite the stipulation in the Agreement that all of the 1.4 million refugees and displaced persons were entitled to return to their homes of origin, that right had been exercised only by 400,000. A comprehensive return, particularly to minority areas, was the cornerstone of a democratic Bosnia and Herzegovina.

127. Regarding cooperation with the International Tribunal, although there had been some improvement in cooperation by the Serbian entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a large number of indictees still remained at large. Her Government would continue its endeavours to secure full cooperation of all political units within Bosnia and Herzegovina, for until all war criminals were brought to justice, the process of reconciliation would be significantly imperiled. Another essential segment of that process was the more than 19,000 missing persons, whose fate should be clarified.

128. **Mr. Rocanas** (Greece) said that his delegation fully supported the statement made by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

129. Referring to the situation of human rights in Cyprus, he said that some delegations argued that Cyprus was thriving economically and that the problem in Cyprus was not as serious as in other parts of the world. Yet human rights were non-selective and indivisible: a violation of the human right that had not been redressed remained a violation, no matter how much time had passed. The time and scale factors were irrelevant when dealing with human rights. That was one reason why the international community had proclaimed that the situation in Cyprus was unacceptable and could only be resolved in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

130. The long list of flagrant violations of human rights in which the Turkish armed forces had been systematically engaged since 1974 had been described by the representative of Cyprus. The situation remained alarming. It was not only the rights of the Greek Cypriots and the Maronites that were being systematically violated; Turkish Cypriots did not have the right to express their views or to pursue regular contacts with members of the Greek Cypriot community and could not be represented or participate in the negotiations on the future membership of Cyprus in the European Union. In recent years, many Turkish Cypriots had been leaving the island, and were being replaced by settlers who were dispatched to the occupied territories in the framework of a well-planned policy of ethnic cleansing and colonization.

131. The Cyprus problem could not simply be ignored or allowed to fester as a dangerous precedent; his delegation called on the international community to be vigilant and on Turkey to act in a responsible manner, in accordance with the relevant international standards.

132. **Ms. Sinegiorgis** (Ethiopia) said that, as a least developed country, Ethiopia attached particular importance to the right to development and its effective implementation. Her delegation therefore welcomed the widening recognition of the right to development as integral to all other human rights and had noted with satisfaction the adoption within the United Nations system of the rights-based approach to development. The decision by the Commission on Human Rights to appoint an independent expert on the right to development was not only encouraging, but also demonstrated the momentum the issue had gained.

133. Ethiopia had been embroiled in a civil war for some 30 years, during which time serious violations of human rights had been committed. After the fall of the military regime in 1991, her Government had committed itself to restoring respect for human rights and had adopted strict legislative measures to that end. Ethiopia was a party to 15 international human rights instruments and its Constitution provided that constitutional provisions dealing with human rights must be interpreted in conformity with the principles of those instruments. Recognizing that additional measures were necessary to ensure de facto enjoyment of human rights, her Government was currently establishing human rights institutions and creating a post of human rights ombudsman. Those developments would mark a major

advance in the promotion and protection of human rights in Ethiopia.

134. Respect for human rights required peace and stability. However, the hostilities which had broken out in northern Ethiopia in May 1998 following a naked act of aggression by the Eritrean Government had led to grave violations of human rights. At the outset of the conflict, Eritrean forces had bombed two Ethiopian towns, deliberately targeting civilian facilities, resulting in the death and maiming of hundreds of civilians, including children. Subsequently, more than 30,000 Ethiopians had been expelled from Eritrea, while others were being detained against their will both in Eritrea and in the occupied areas and subjected to torture, beatings, rape and intimidation. A number of civilians had died from asphyxiation after being incarcerated in unventilated cargo containers. More than 300,000 Ethiopians living in the occupied areas had been displaced and were now completely destitute. Others had been forced to take Eritrean nationality, while young men were being forcibly conscripted into the invading army.

135. Meanwhile, the Eritrean Government was attempting to manipulate international public opinion by making false accusations of violations of the rights of Eritreans residing in Ethiopia. It was true that her Government, as was its sovereign right, had taken precautionary measures against Eritrean individuals and organizations engaged in clandestine activities which undermined the security of Ethiopia, but the allegations of mass expulsions were unfounded. Indeed, over a quarter of a million Eritreans continued to live and work peacefully in Ethiopia. Although Eritrea was not a party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, it had a moral duty to comply with their provisions, which constituted established international norms governing the behaviour of States. She therefore urged the international community to bring pressure to bear upon the Eritrean Government to halt the gross violations of the human rights of Ethiopians residing in Eritrea and in the territories illegally occupied by that country.

136. **Mrs. Cvetanovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that, in the 50 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an impressive structure of human rights standards had been created that had guided the constitutions and legislation of many countries, including her own. Adopting standards was of course only one condition for the effective enjoyment of human rights, but the further development of standards should nevertheless proceed and they should reinforce those already in existence. Thus, she welcomed the work on the draft optional protocols to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment. Also, it was fitting that the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration should be marked by the adoption of the draft declaration on the right and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms (A/C.3/53/L.5).

137. She applauded the growing recognition that human rights, democracy and development went hand in hand: while the best preconditions for economic and social progress were democracy and the rule of law, improving economic and social conditions had a favourable impact through improved observance of civil and political rights and decreased tension in societies. Thus, the Declaration on the Right to Development should be further affirmed and implemented in full.

138. She emphasized the plight of children involved in armed conflicts, being used as child labour and suffering sexual abuse, and called for maximum engagement in preventing such occurrences; the most important thing was to eliminate the causes, which frequently had to do with poverty, underdevelopment, lack of education and the like.

139. Her Government believed that much remained to be done in the area of gender equality, although the results of the deliberations within the United Nations system and the work of the international organizations themselves were satisfactory. In that connection, she informed the Committee that the Republic of Macedonia had adopted a declaration on gender equality in the decision-making process.

140. Her delegation considered that the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and the work done by the Commission on Human Rights and the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities were highly significant; furthermore, the participation of non-governmental organizations in that work was an important step in the protection for minorities' rights. Similarly, her delegation welcomed the recent adoption by the Council of Europe of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. It was especially important that the Framework Convention had been signed by the countries of south-eastern Europe, including her own: that commitment to minorities' rights would enhance confidence and promote good-neighbourly relations among the countries of the region. Another welcome development was the commencement of political dialogue with those countries of south-eastern Europe, including the Republic of Macedonia, that had expressed an interest in joining the

European Union. She hoped that the process would intensify in the near future.

141. Her delegation favoured strengthening the mandate and activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, was pleased with the leadership shown by Mrs. Robinson and gave the High Commissioner and her Office its full support in the hope that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action would be implemented in full in the years ahead.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

142. **Mr. Abdelhalim** (Sudan) welcomed the fact that the representative of Austria, speaking on behalf of the European Union, had recognized the Sudanese Government's efforts in the human rights field. The European Union was also aware of his Government's efforts to find a peaceful and lasting solution that would address the root causes of the conflict. In that connection, the Government was seeking to ensure full democratic participation, particularly since the adoption of the new Constitution and the Political Parties Act, whereby political parties would be able to begin their activities in January 1999.

143. The reports of human rights violations mentioned by the representative of Austria had originated within certain well-known circles whose secret objectives were to inflame the war and bring devastation to the Sudanese people.

144. The statement by the representative of the United States on human rights violations in the Sudan was baseless and unacceptable: the Sudan, together with all other African States, knew very well that for the United States human rights meant politicization and double standards as a tool for coercion, interference and pre-emption of other States' right to chose their own ways and means of conducting their affairs. The policies and practices of the United States were the greatest enemy of human rights, and it was hard to forget that the United States had been the backbone of apartheid, a crime against humanity. It rejected the right to development, thus standing in the way of the developing world in general and Africa in particular. It was ironic to hear the United States talk about human rights, given its lack of credibility and moral standing both at home and abroad.

145. In that connection, he noted that, according to a recent report by Amnesty International, there was a persistent and widespread pattern of human rights violations in the United States, where thousands of people were subjected to deliberate brutality; racism was contributing to the denial of the fundamental rights of countless men, women and children; and the overwhelming majority of victims in many areas were members of racial or ethnic minorities.

146. His country had been the victim of United States actions against the Sudanese people's human rights in the destruction of the Shifa pharmaceutical factory in flagrant violation of international law. The attack had been universally condemned, and had been judged at a recent meeting of the Group of 77 to be in violation of the Sudan's right to development. The destruction of the pharmaceutical factory had worsened the humanitarian situation throughout the Sudan and especially in the south, a situation further aggravated by United States unilateral sanctions. The United States was responsible for prolonging the war in the Sudan through its policy of destabilization, which had brought misery and death to innocent people. The Sudan was proud to be in the forefront of human rights, guided by its traditions and values. In connection with human rights violations, he recalled the maxim that those who lived in glass houses should not throw stones.

147. **Mr. Shen Guofang** (China) said that in recent days representatives of Norway, of European Union member States, the United States and some other countries had made groundless accusations against China which his delegation rejected outright: in China, the rule of law prevailed and the Government had always attached great importance to the protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

148. China was willing to work with other countries, engage in dialogue and exchange views on human rights questions on a basis of mutual respect and equality in order to promote mutual understanding, narrow differences and promote the international cause of human rights. However, it was opposed to some countries' practice within the United Nations, based on a cold-war mindset, of accusing others on human rights questions and regretted that a few Western countries had done so against China and other developing countries in a manner inconsistent with dialogue and cooperation on human rights.

149. When discussing human rights in United Nations forums, delegations should first look to the violations occurring in their own countries: his delegation hoped that they would have the courage to talk about those too. He reminded the Committee that China was party to 17 international human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in contrast to the United States, which was party to very few indeed and to those only with many reservations. His delegation hoped that the United States would accede to the other conventions also.

150. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, his delegation called on the Western countries to give up their cold-war mindsets and confrontational practices and should return to dialogue and cooperation in order to contribute to the promotion of human rights.

151. **Mr. Fernández Palacios** (Cuba) said that his delegation regretted having to reply to the allegations made by the representative of Canada, a country with which Cuba maintained a mutually beneficial dialogue and a productive relationship. The dialogue also covered human rights in the two countries.

152. Although Cuba recognized the progress made in human rights in Canada, nevertheless the conditions under which the indigenous people and other minorities were forced to live there — at the bottom of society, sunk in poverty, deprived of their cultures and ancestral rights, including ownership of the land on which they had lived for generations — continued to be a cause of special concern for many Cubans.

153. In response to the statement by the representative of Australia, his delegation called on that country to stop taking steps to limit the scope of international human rights treaties to which it was party. Also, his delegation continued to be concerned at the alarmingly high rate of deaths in custody in Australia, especially amongst Aborigines and Torres Strait islanders. Those minorities, some two per cent of the population, were extraordinarily over-represented amongst the prison population and were particularly likely to suffer abuses. The Cuban Government expected that the Australian authorities would have much to learn from Cuba's legitimate concerns.

154. **Mr. Mesdoua** (Algeria) said that the representatives of New Zealand, Canada and Australia had reviewed the human rights situations in various parts of the world without proper care for the impartiality that ought to obtain in the discussion of such sensitive matters as human rights.

155. The representative of New Zealand would have been well advised to recall his own country's recent history of relations with its indigenous people, whose worrying situation was a matter of concern to the international community: in terms of access to land, education, employment, housing and health services, they were the most deprived of all New Zealanders, and while they were almost unrepresented in terms of conducting the business of the State, they were the worst affected by social problems such as alcoholism, drug addiction, delinquency and incarceration.

156. To the statement by the representative of Canada, he replied that Canada was not without shortcomings in its human rights record; its human rights violations were legion, particularly against its indigenous and minority populations, many of whose rights were denied. Also, the representative's statement had contained a number of inaccuracies: firstly — he gave the representative the benefit of the doubt as to whether the statement had been made in bad faith or merely in ignorance of the real situation in Algeria — any "humanitarian situation" in Algeria existed only in the mind of the representative of Canada. Secondly, on the security front, objective and alert observers of the situation contradicted the representative. Thirdly, his delegation did not see why the convergence of political and religious events should be cause for concern: Algeria was preparing for the forthcoming presidential elections in all tranquillity and for the month of Ramadan — which Algeria would celebrate along with the rest of the Muslim world — with fervour. Lastly, his delegation was astonished by and objected to any suggestion that the panel of eminent persons, which the Government had invited to Algeria, had said that cooperation should be extended to other parts of the United Nations human rights machinery: Algeria already enjoyed relations with those mechanisms and had not needed advice from Canada or any other country before establishing such relations.

157. That the representatives of Australia, Canada and New Zealand had failed to deplore the terrorism which the people of Algeria were confronting with determination and courage disqualified them from referring to any human rights situation in any country, least of all Algeria: they had turned a blind eye to the remarkable progress that Algeria had made in consolidating the rule of law and democracy as an expression of its people's sovereign will. Human rights were no country's monopoly; every country needed to promote human rights objectively and with no double standards.

158. **Mr. Choe Myong Nam** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) rejected the preposterous allegations by the representative of the United States about the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic: that statement had been a purely political ploy and worthless in terms of human rights. As was the case for most of the countries accused on human rights grounds by the United States, the slander was politically motivated. The United States had been trying to isolate the Democratic People's Republic politically, suffocate it economically and isolate it militarily for the simple reason that the Democratic People's Republic did not follow the United States blindly or surrender to its power politics or arbitrary will.

159. The "human rights problem" in his country was a fabrication issuing from the United States policy of isolating and stifling the Democratic People's Republic with a view to dissolving it and overthrowing its social system: indeed the real human rights abuse lay in that policy. In his country, which maintained a philosophy of keeping the human being at the centre of its concern, everyone enjoyed the human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the international human rights instruments. Nevertheless, the representative of the United States had claimed that there were problems in the human rights situation there by adducing the problem of sustenance as an example. Meanwhile, it intentionally ignored the fact that it was the constant military threat and harsh economic sanctions emanating from the United States that were the primary obstacle to the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms by the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

160. Also, the representative of the United States had failed to say that the Government had been doing its utmost to ensure its citizens' enjoyment of human rights or that because of those efforts and despite temporary difficulties imposed by several consecutive years of natural disasters and the artificial obstacles imposed by the United States, the support and trust of the citizens of the Democratic People's Republic for their Government were boundless. Of course, the representative had had to ignore those facts if he was to spread his Government's customary fabrications about human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic.

161. It was disgusting that the United States, setting itself up as a human rights judge, should accuse an array of other countries on the basis of their human rights records: while it constantly urged other countries to respect human rights, the United States lagged far behind others in implementation of human rights standards. It had never been honest enough to discuss its own human rights problems openly, and its silence on those matters did not indicate perfection; rather, it demonstrated the reverse: while the United States accused other countries, 26 million of its own people were starving, over 40 million were living below the poverty line and 47 million could not obtain health care. Also, tens of thousands of coloured people were daily subjected to racial discrimination and many were victims of violent crime. The prison population was over one million, the highest rate of incarceration in the world. Degrading treatment of prisoners, particularly rape of female prisoners, and cruel punishment with 50,000 volts of electricity were rife. The United States also had a disgraceful human rights record abroad: since 1776, it had been involved in over 70 wars resulting in the death of untold numbers of people. The same was going on today in areas where United States troops were stationed.

162. Those and the many other human rights violations which the Government of the United States committed at home and abroad were deeply rooted in its policy, which espoused the law of the jungle in its competition for existence. Because of its notorious human rights record, which was already the focus of attention from the international community, the United States had been selected by Amnesty International for investigation during its annual human rights campaign. That the United States was criticizing other countries' human rights records while under investigation itself was a case of the "pot calling the kettle black".

163. Mr. Al-Hussainaldi (Iraq) said that the representatives of Canada and New Zealand in particular had spoken of human rights violations in Iraq, but their words had merely been tiresome repetitions of the accusations of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iraq which the delegation of Iraq had rebutted during the discussion of the Special Rapporteur's report (A/53/433). The hostile propaganda which the representatives had echoed was politically motivated and was intended to destabilize the political and national unity of Iraq and change the Iraqi regime. That purpose had nothing whatsoever to do with the human rights situation in Iraq.

164. Mr. Tekle (Eritrea) said that the charges of aggression that had been levelled against Eritrea had already been amply answered in the Third Committee, the First Committee and the General Assembly. However, the representative of Ethiopia had referred to aerial bombing by Eritrea without mentioning that her own country had struck first. Her Prime Minister had tacitly accepted as much in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on 15 July 1998. The representative of Ethiopia had accused Eritrea of targeting civilians, but in Eritrea's retaliatory aerial bombing, which the Ethiopian Prime Minister, in the same BBC interview, had said was targeted on schools, Eritrea had destroyed MIG jets, helicopter gunships and a transport plane, which were hardly school equipment.

165. The accusations that Eritrea had expelled Ethiopians from Eritrea were false, and he defied the representative of Ethiopia to prove that reports by European Union missions, United Nations agencies, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary-General, the Prime Minister of Sweden and Amnesty International were faked.

166. The booklet and paper produced by the Ethiopian delegation on Eritrea's alleged atrocities were not worth the paper they were written on, as they were products of the

sinister propaganda machine inherited from the former military regime. Thus, they were not the work of independent third parties, unlike the report on the mass expulsion of Eritreans from Ethiopia annexed to document A/53/494–S/1998/949. The allegations they contained were false, and demonstrably so. The so-called letters of complaint against the High Commissioner for Human Rights had been orchestrated by the Government of Ethiopia in retaliation for her denunciation of its violation of the human rights of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin.

167. Furthermore, on 8 November 1998, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) high-level delegation on the dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia, meeting in Ouagadougou, had issued a press release reporting the adoption of a set of proposals constituting elements of a framework agreement for a peaceful settlement of the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Yet the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia had claimed that OAU had called for the withdrawal of Eritrean troops from the Badme region. The Eritrean Government, for its part, had issued a statement which had reflected the OAU press release, recognizing that OAU had called on both sides to reflect on the talking points handed over to them. Delegations must decide which Government to believe.

168. The Ethiopian Government's claim that Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin whose human rights it had violated were spies had already received an adequate reply. The representative of Ethiopia had also accused Eritrea of targeting civilians. Nothing could be further from the truth. He invited the United Nations or any other organization to send verification teams to his country and challenged the Government of Ethiopia to extend a similar invitation. He suggested that delegations should compare Eritrea's human rights record since its independence in 1993 with that of Ethiopia during the same period and that they should refer also to the reports issued by Human Rights Watch and by the State Department of the United States of America.

169. Mr. Rastam (Malaysia) said that he was intrigued by some delegations' practice of referring to human rights violations committed in many countries other than their own. For example, the representative of Canada had alleged that the Government of Malaysia detained political opponents and others without trial and restricted freedom of speech and assembly under that country's Internal Security Act. That Act had been passed by the Malaysian Parliament, as any State had the right to do, in its efforts to protect citizens by ensuring national security. The Act had been prompted by the alarming security situation which had arisen in Malaysia as a result of Communist terrorism and insurgency over a period of five decades. That situation had ended with the surrender of the remaining communist terrorists in 1989, largely owing to the effective use of the Act.

170. That instrument was not used to restrict freedom of speech or assembly; however, it did apply to those who abused those rights in order to threaten the stability and security of Malaysia's multiracial, multi-religious society. Freedom of speech, freedom of association and peaceful assembly entailed certain responsibilities, and those who promoted violence and social unrest must be made accountable for their actions. The Government must be able to act swiftly and effectively, particularly in the case of emerging threats to national security.

171. With regard to the representative of Canada's expression of concern regarding the treatment of the former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, his Government condemned police brutality, wherever committed, and had ordered an independent, impartial investigation of the matter.

172. **Ms. Pang** (Singapore), said that the representative of Canada had remarked on the extensive use of the death penalty in China. In that regard, she referred to her own delegation's remarks made at an earlier meeting in exercise of the right of reply to a statement by the representative of Norway on behalf of the European Union and associated States. The death penalty was not prohibited under international law; article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights specifically recognized the right of States to impose the death penalty for the most serious crimes, as long as it was carried out in accordance with internationally recognized safeguards. The issue was one on which Governments must agree to disagree and, as long as some States attempted to impose their own systems on others, Singapore would join those other States in vigorously defending its own system of justice and punishment.

173. **Mr. Arda** (Turkey) said that the allegations made annually by the representative of Greece were an abuse of the Committee's time and patience. The division of Cyprus had taken place 25 years previously when Greek Cypriot leaders, openly encouraged and supported by the Greek Government, had attempted to change a constitutional order established by international treaties, initiating a bloody campaign of ethnic cleansing and, by so doing, dividing the island. In 1974, the Greek Government had made a second attempt to annex Cyprus. In view of that Government's direct responsibility for those events, it was difficult to see how the representative of Greece could accuse Turkey of responsibility for the situation in Cyprus.

174. The representative of Greece's statement was full of distortions and half-truths. As a guarantor, the Greek Government was well aware that the Turkish intervention

in 1974 had been consistent with its rights and obligations under the Treaty of Guarantee. Were it not for that intervention, the fate of the Turkish Cypriots would have been no different from that of the Bosnians. The tone, style and content of the representative of Greece's statement was a reflection of the obsessive-compulsive Greek policy towards Turkey, which, unfortunately, had had repercussions for the people of Greece. According to a recent survey, only 21 per cent of the Greek population considered tolerance to be a virtue which parents should endeavour to inculcate in their children; that percentage was the lowest of any country in the European Union. The survey had also shown that the majority of Greeks had an aversion to Turks, Albanians, Jews and Gypsies. In view of the current preparations for a world conference on racism, those were alarming statistics.

175. **Ms. Sineglorgis** (Ethiopia) said that the representative of Eritrea was attempting to create confusion through false accusations of human rights violations against Eritreans living in Ethiopia. The Eritrean Government's violation of the human rights of Ethiopians living in the occupied portion of Ethiopia, and in Eritrea itself, had been verified independently. Only a week previously, OAU had issued a press release requesting Eritrea's withdrawal from that territory, and there had been numerous reports of systematic searches, beatings, torture, rape and murder. The Government of Eritrea claimed to have allowed foreign observers to monitor the situation of human rights of Ethiopians in Eritrea; however, those observers had been granted entry only after the fact and had been permitted to speak only with persons connected to the Government. Any abuses had begun with Eritrea's invasion of Ethiopia and had continued because of its refusal to withdraw.

176. For further information, she referred delegations to the study annexed to document A/53/528–S/1998/981. The representative of Eritrea's attempts to question the authenticity of a document which bore witness to its violations of the human rights of Ethiopians was typical of that Government's arrogant refusal to accept responsibility to its actions.

177. **Mr. Zackheos** Cyprus) said that the representative of Turkey, despite his eloquence, had a very weak case on which to base a defence. The Turkish invasion and occupation of a small, defenceless country, Cyprus, had been condemned by all international organizations and was incompatible with international law and with the Charter of the United Nations. The Turkish Government's dismal human rights record, as evidenced by its ill-treatment of minorities, summary executions, enforced disappearances, razing of conquered villages and imprisonment of opposition leaders and human rights activists, was known to all.

178. The Turkish representative had not responded to the well-documented evidence of human rights violations committed by his country following its invasion of Cyprus. Like all representatives of Turkey, he had a propensity for selective memory; he referred only to the past, forgetting that in a situation of armed conflict, excesses might be, and indeed had been, committed by both sides. His own Government had admitted that fact, and he urged the Turkish Government to do likewise rather than seeking to attract support for its expansionist designs and its attempt to ensure recognition of the secessionist entities which it had artificially created in the north of Cyprus and maintained in power through the deployment of Turkish troops.

179. In conclusion, he emphasized that, while his people would never reconcile themselves to the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, they would always extend the hand of friendship, cooperation and understanding to their Turkish Cypriot compatriots, with whom they hoped to live in a tolerant, multicultural society as in the past. Cyprus had much to offer all its citizens and could serve as a bridge for improved relations between Greece and Turkey if the Turkish Government abandoned its outdated policies of occupation and challenge to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbours.

180. **Mr. Rocanas** (Greece) said that the representative of Cyprus had eloquently described the political situation in that country. Turkey's abysmal record of human rights, not only in Cyprus but with respect to the Kurds, Armenians, Jews and other minorities, placed its representative in a glass house from which he was ill-advised to cast stones. His own Government preferred to look elsewhere for inspiration.

181. **Mr. Tekle** (Eritrea) said that he was not alone in his accusations against the Government of Ethiopia; the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Prime Minister of Sweden and Amnesty International had made similar observations. After reading out the OAU press release to which the representative of Eritrea had referred, he suggested that observers should visit both countries to evaluate the situation. There were serious ethnic, religious and political tensions in Ethiopia, and he wondered whether the international community would wait until its television screens showed blood and dead bodies before acting. The Ethiopian Government's policy of ethnic cleansing had reached a staggering level and posed a threat to regional peace and security.

182. **Mr. Arda** (Turkey) said that Turkey was proud of its tradition of tolerance. Greeks and Greek Cypriots, who were responsible for all the misfortune suffered by Cyprus since

1963, had reiterated their cynical and unfounded allegations against his country. The state of mind reflected in the representative of Greece's statement made it clear why Greek Cypriots could not come to terms with the Turkish Cypriots or live peacefully with them as equals. The basic requirements for shaping the future of Cyprus were realism and acknowledgement of the fact that since 1963, southern Cyprus had been administered solely by the Greek Cypriots. Cyprus was currently inhabited by two sovereign peoples, each with its own language, culture and religion; there were two democratic systems, two legal structures and two separate States.

183. **Mr. Choe Myong Nam** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation saw no need to comment on the representative of Canada's allegations regarding his Government, which were a stereotyped fabrication that bore no relationship to human rights and, moreover, had merely reiterated the Canadian delegation's statement of the previous year. He warned the Canadian Government that unless it refrained immediately from abusing humanitarian issues for its sinister political propaganda against his country, it would face the consequences.

184. **Ms. Sinegiorgis** (Ethiopia) said that the representative of Eritrea did not hold a brief for the High Commissioner for Human Rights or the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who could speak for themselves. She was happy to report that in her country, there were human rights organizations and independent newspapers which were free to express whatever opinions they chose. The situation in 1996, or reports thereof, had no relevance to the current discussion. If the representative of Eritrea found the truth painful, that was not her fault.

185. It was universally known and had been verified by third parties that it was Eritrea which had invaded Ethiopia and occupied part of its territory, and numerous international bodies had asked the Eritrean Government to withdraw. The OAU press release had presented a peace proposal to the two parties to the conflict and had requested Eritrea's withdrawal from Badme and its environs.

186. **Mr. Zackheos** (Cyprus) said that his Government supported the positions of the Security Council and that he wondered whether the Turkish Government could say the same. The only reality in Cyprus was that of the Turkish invasion and the massive violations of the human rights of the Cypriots. As long as the Turkish Government's interference with the internal affairs of Cyprus continued, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots would continue to suffer. Regrettably, a third of the Turkish Cypriot population had fled the occupied part of Cyprus. No one was willing to accept the existence of a Turkish puppet regime in the occupied area, in violation of international law and Security Council resolutions.

187. **Mr. Rocanas** (Greece) said that he associated himself with the statement which the representative of Cyprus had just made. It was the Turkish invasion of Cyprus which had created the situation of human rights violations that he had described in his own previous statement. If only Turkey would live up to its freely undertaken commitments and cease its efforts to undermine progress towards a negotiated, viable settlement of the Cyprus issue, not only its own credibility, but that of the international community and, in particular, that of the United Nations, would be enhanced.

The meeting rose at 7.50 p.m.